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Institute, is engaged in a great work on comparative osteology. His object is to investigate the analogies between the corresponding parts of animals with vertebræ. If any thing can elucidate the origin of organized bodies, it must probably be sought in the parts, that are constantly found more or less similar in number and situation, notwithstanding their dissimilitude in size and use, and irreconcileableness with any apparent final cause.

Mr. Dumeril has treated very ably on the mechanism of respiration in fishes, in which he has pointed out some interesting singularities; on the organ of taste in fishes, which he supposes to be the pituitary membrane; and on the vital and animal functions of certain reptiles.

Several other papers on the class amphibia have been read. Mr. Cuvier has shown, that there are at least twelve very distinct species of crocodiles in the two hemispheres. He has likewise examined a few amphibia that some naturalists have considered as tadpoles, and shown them to be animals in a perfect state.

Mr. Dupuytren has demonstrated, that the action of the nerves of the lungs is indispensible in respiration.

Mr. Dupetit Thouars has pursued his researches in confirmation of his opinion, that the principle of the increase of the trunks of trees is in the buds; that the annual layers of wood are composed of the roots of the buds; and that the little medullary thread terminating each bud, performs the office of a cotyledon.

The celebrated chemist Crell, has been making experiments on one of the most important subjects in vegetation, namely, whether plants can acquire carbon, and whatever is necessary to their growth, from pure distilled water alone. These, which he has communicated to the class, appear to favour the affirmative side of the question; but we cannot pronounce them absolutely decisive.

REVIEW OF NEW PUBLICATIONS.

A Letter addressed to John Cartwright, esq. Chairman of the Committee, at the Crown and Anchor, on the subject of Parliamentary Reform; by the Earl of Selkirk. London, printed for Constable and co. Price, 1*s.* 1*d.*

THE Earl of Selkirk has a kind of family claim to be considered eminent in the ranks of patriotism. His father was on the popular side, and his elder brother, Lord Daer, was well known for his zeal in promoting the cause of parliamentary reform, in 1793, before the unhappy issue of the French Revolution operated as a powerful discouragement to all reform. The Earl of Selkirk himself has also generally ranked under the banners of the liberal side, but at present he appears, no doubt with virtuous intentions, to have arranged himself to a certain degree, in the opposite ranks, though as far as we are able to judge, he is very far from joining heartily, or with thorough conviction in the cause of the Anti-reformers. They, however, seem proud of his accession to them, and are loud in their praises of his letter. In proportion as they are solicitous to avail themselves of the sanction of his name, so ought the friends of reform to be willing to attend to him when he assigns the moving causes for the change in his political conduct.

This letter is in answer to one he received, inviting him to act as steward at the late meeting of the friends to parliamentary reform. He thus pourtrays his former sentiments on this subject, and candidly admits the changes which have since taken place.

"To parliamentary reform my father and brother were, as you well know, zealous friends; and all my own early prepossessions were in favour of such a measure. I saw, with abhorrence, the ascendancy which unprincipled and worthless characters often acquired through the influence of corruption. I lamented the public advantages so often sacrificed to the interest of individuals. I was struck with the glaring manner in which the practice of our Constitution appeared to deviate from its theory; and I flattered myself that if the representation of the people were

put upon a proper footing, these abuses would be eradicated; that if the representation were equalized—the right of suffrage extended—the duration of parliament shortened—bribery could scarcely be applied with effect; that the influence of corruption being thus removed, the real friends of the country would obtain the preference naturally due to worth and talents; and that, the House of Commons being so composed, every abuse would speedily be checked or thoroughly reformed.

"Of the correctness of this practical conclusion, I have since seen reason to doubt—not that my feelings of abhorrence and contempt for corruption and venality have undergone any change; in these sentiments I do not fall short of those honoured relatives, with whose opinions you were well acquainted; but I have had an opportunity, which they never had, of seeing the practical applications of those principles from which we expected consequences so beneficial.—With grief and mortification I perceive that no such advantages had resulted, as from theory I had been led to anticipate.

"I allude to the observations, which I had occasion to make in the United States of America, where a system of representation is established, approaching as nearly as perhaps is practicable to the theoretical perfection at which you aim; and where that system is combined with a general diffusion of property, of itself calculated to check, in a great degree, the force of corruption. A very short acquaintance with the legislative proceedings of America may afford conviction, that universal suffrage and frequency of election, prove no bar to the misconduct of representatives; and that a political adventurer, raised to power by popular favour, is fully as likely to abuse that power, as is the purchaser of a rotten borough.

"There is no ground for the idea, that in that country public affairs are managed with a higher regard to the public welfare than in our own. The Parliament of England, with all its corruptions, cannot be accused of proceedings approaching, in disgrace, to the infamous and bare-faced jobs, which have been transacted in many of the legislatures of America. It is evident to the most careless observation, that the state of public morals is there worse than in England—that political integrity is less respected—that corrupt motives have not the same degree of check from feelings of honour as they have among Englishmen. To sum up all, there is no room for comparison between the two countries in that great test of a good government, the administration of justice."

It is far from our inclination to be the unqualified panegyrists of the American constitution, and far less to be the defenders of the American character throughout; in the latter we are sensible of many defects, and are afraid that political and commercial honour is at a low ebb in that country: but, do these defects arise from their constitution? We think not. Probably these defects would be still more glaring under a worse system of government. Neither do we think that parliamentary reform would operate as a charm, to remove vice in these countries, but some of the facilities to commit vice at the expense of the public would be removed, and to borrow a simile from agriculture, by frequently cutting the weeds in a rank soil, the roots in time might be rotted, while others might at once be eradicated by other operations. To deduce reasons against parliamentary reform, because the American states-men are not free from faults, or because the representatives of rotten boroughs may chance to be honest men, is, we think, not fair reasoning, and if admitted, would tend to the deterioration, or lowering of virtuous principle. All human institutions are necessarily subject to errors in the management, but because we cannot attain to perfection, must all attempts to remove flagrant abuses, be laid aside as visionary and hopeless?

The Earl of Selkirk admits, "In our Government, chance has blended together these opposite vices, in such a manner to correct each other's violence, and produce a compound, far indeed from perfect, but less noxious than if either of these principles had an unqualified predominance." For our parts we are not fond of the doctrine of this fortuitous concurrence of atoms, but think the constitution would be improved, by removing the deleterious ingredients of the mixture.

On the subject of parliamentary reform the Earl of Selkirk is with the opponents of that measure, but the honest principles of his heart are evinced in his remarks on corruption, and here the enemies to reform have not the honour to enrol him in their ranks. He is afraid that the attention to economical reform may be distracted by a struggle for parliamentary reform, which he says "would come at the present moment most seasonably to the aid of the anti-jacobin hypocrites, who are trembling for their ill-gotten gains," and is anxious that those who wish honestly to pursue the good of the country may not again be forced to make their option between jacobin and anti-jacobin. We give him credit for his virtuous sentiments, although we differ so materially from him, because we think that without radically amending our constitution by the reform of the popular branch, we can have no security that any provisions that may be adopted against the present prevailing and overwhelming system of corruption can be permanently effectual.—There have been many commissions to detect abuses, but we believe the detections in consequence have not compensated for the additional load laid on the people by the salaries of those commissioners. Ministers have no objection to appointing commissioners, because they thus increase their patronage, and they trust to their address to defeat any beneficial results from these inquiries. Thus the system goes on. Lord Melville is impeached, and again restored to his seat at the council board. Corruption advances with unblushing front. All temporary expedients have proved ineffectual. We confess we have great confidence in the reformation of parliament, as consolidating all other reforms, and giving permanency and effect to them. If parliament were really reformed, we would then have watchful guardians of the public purse, who would have a common interest with their constituents. He thus advances his virtuous sentiments against corruption.

"We are told, however, that a reform in parliament is a necessary preliminary to the redress of other grievances. The facts which I have already stated, may suffice to prove that this notion is not only unfounded, but the very reverse of the truth, and I consider it as a delusion peculiarly unfortunate at the present moment. The attention of the country has of late been roused to a multitude of abuses in the management of the public money, and in the distribution of public employment.—No candid man can entertain a doubt of the importance of checking, and as far as possible eradicating such abuses. They have a direct tendency to waste the national resources, to aggravate the burdens of the people, and to damp their patriotic exertions, by exciting a general belief that the nation is oppressed to serve the sinister purposes of individuals.

"The measures which are so necessary for removing these evils, may not be agreeable to those who profit by their continuance; and objections are urged, as objections always will be urged, against any innovation by which the interest of many individuals are to be affected. But reforms of this description do not necessarily involve any consequences dangerous to the country: on the contrary, the most serious perils are to be apprehended from neglecting them. To every just measure of economical reform, I am therefore a decided friend; but the constitution, as it now exists, has sufficient means for the correction of all these abuses; and if the attention of the public be not diverted from that great object, the management of the revenue may and will be reformed."

As to the existence of abuses, this respectable senator and we are agreed, though we differ as to the more effectual mode of removing them. On another point we are also agreed, that the want of success lies with the people. He remarks:

"The efforts hitherto made for that object, have had little success, because they have obtained from the public at large, but a feeble support. The importance of the object has not been sufficiently appreciated; but the nation is now alive to it. If a steady and persevering support be given to those who exert themselves

in parliament for the attainment of economical reform, the friends of that principle will multiply every day; and sooner or later, the ministry will find it impossible to hold out against the public voice."

While this apathy remains, abuses must continue. Administrations, or even parliaments will not reform themselves, unless the expression of the public will is explicitly defined, and the demand on them is loud and strong. Attempts at reformation must be abortive, unless the people do their parts. We do not recommend intemperate brawling; by violence a good cause is injured, and the cause of reform is too justly founded to need such means; but we wish to see the people more generally throw aside the present childish and imbecile dread of reform, and assert their claims with the calm dignity of men who know and duly appreciate their rights.

K.

Practical Sermons on Interesting Subjects; by the Rev. Thomas E. Higginson. Sermon 2d. 8vo. p. p. 26. Belfast, Smyth and Lyons, 1809.

THIS is the second of a series of sermons, intended to be published. On the first we have already commented, in the manner which we thought its merits deserved.*

Of the present we shall observe, in the first place, that it corresponds more with the professed intention of the author than the former; that intention being, as far as we can judge from his own words, "to deliver a system of preceptive Christianity, suitable to all sects." Its text is, "Search the Scriptures;" and its substance consists of arguments, enforcing the necessity of referring to the Bible for the principles of faith and practice, instead of depending on mere human compositions. It may therefore be looked upon as a preface or introduction to those that are to follow, and therefore, in our opinion, ought to have had the first place. Nor can we see why the reverend author chose to commence his series by a subject totally irrelevant to his main design, unless it has been sent forward as a forlorn hope, or the first detachment of grenadiers to a breach, to bear the brunt of the attack, and waste the enemies' ammunition and fire, so that the main body may effect its design unmolested. He will be much mistaken, however, if he expects to find us asleep on our post. Or, he might have sent it out as a proof of his abilities, as musicians usually give a flourish on their instruments before they commence their sonata. If such was his intention, he should have known that such preludes are always in the key note

The necessity of studying the Scriptures for Christian knowledge, instead of relying on subsequent comments and explanations, is in general well stated in the following paragraph:

"We have reason to esteem it abundant cause for gratitude, that God has in every revolution of time, and as circumstances required, raised up in his church wise and faithful ministers, so replenished with the truth of his doctrine, and so adorned with innocency of life, as to be fully fitted to enforce and explain his sacred oracles; and both by word and deed faithfully to serve him in their several offices, to the glory of his name and the edifying of his people. But the enemy of souls on his side has not been idle: ever on the watch to counteract the designs of God's spiritual government, and to introduce his tares among the excellent seed. It is to this that we have to ascribe such frequent divisions in the church of Christ; that we see men otherwise calculated for extensive usefulness, induced to become leaders of separation, and to introduce opinions which have no foundation in the divine testimony, as well as dangerous and destructive to God's people: and that many, imposed on by their insinuations, have been led to depart from the Christian ordinances, from the long established and well authenticated means of grace, and to adopt maxims and sentiments quite novel in the church of Christ. Hence it is that we see the most useful truths perverted; and doctrines, that in the beautiful simplicity of Scripture, sweetly harmonize together, and which, by their beneficial influence, tend to form the complete christian character, in humble dependence upon God, and active benevolence towards man: we see them, through the perversion of human subtlety, made apparently to

* See vol. 2, page 218.